

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 37-63 are now active in the present application, original claims 1-36 having been cancelled. New claim 37 corresponds to original claims 1 and 2. New claim 45 corresponds to original claims 1 and 3. New claim 53 corresponds to original claims 1, 2 and 4. New claims 38 and 54 are supported by the specification at page 17, line 24. New claim 60 is supported at page 17, lines 14-19. The other dependent claims from each of the independent claims correspond to the original dependent claims. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

The present invention relates to a process for producing a modified electrolyte by first contacting a solid polymer electrolyte or precursor thereof, with an amine compound, then subjecting the resultant amine-contacted solid polymer electrolyte or precursor thereof to either or both of a heat treatment step or a base treatment step. Applicants have found that this combination of amine contacting followed by either or both of heat treatment or base treatment provides significant advantages in heat resistance and creep resistance of the final modified electrolyte, while giving almost no decrease in electric conductivity.

Claims 1, 5 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 over Helmer-Metzmann et al. Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 over Michot et al. Claims 1 and 6-8 stand “provisionally” rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 over Moya. Applicants note that none of the cited references disclose or suggest the process as now claimed. In particular, Helmer-Metzmann et al disclose contacting an aromatic electrolyte polymer with an amine compound (see column 4 and Examples). However, there is no disclosure or suggestion of following that amine contacting step with either a heating step or a base treatment step, or of the improvements in heat resistance or creep resistance that can be obtained in the resulting product.

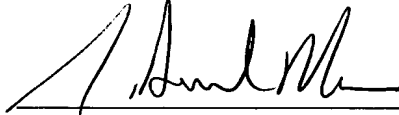
Michot et al and Moya each disclose contacting a perfluoro electrolyte polymer with an amine compound, such as ammonia. However, once again, neither reference discloses or suggests a subsequent heat treatment or base treatment step (or both), nor the improvements in heat or creep resistance that result in using such a combination of steps.

Since none of the references disclose contacting a solid polymer electrolyte with an amine compound followed by either a heat treatment or base treatment step (or both), the references cited cannot render the present invention obvious. Further, since the references do not suggest the process steps as claimed, and cannot render the invention obvious, there is no necessity for Applicants to provide any further evidence with respect to any "inherency" property suggested by the Examiner. The references simply do not show or suggest the steps of the present claims as amended and therefore the rejections should be withdrawn.

Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance and early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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